

are well known: between 1814 and 1835 British cotton goods exported to India rose from one million yards to thirty-one million yards; while the value of Indian cotton goods exported in the same seventeen years fell to one-thirteenth its original size. The thriving textile towns, Dacca, Murshidabad, Surat, Madurai, were laid waste. Britain's Industrial Revolution demolished India's textile trade, and from being exporters of handloom textiles we became exporters of raw cotton and a market for imported mill-made cloth, which even undercut domestic textiles.

The new taxes that were imposed by the British, and the shifts in textile production left the peasants, who were now solely dependent on agriculture, even more vulnerable. In Europe, handloom weavers who had been displaced found jobs in the new industries, which also employed many women. But in India even men had few such alternatives. They flooded into the already impoverished agriculture labour market, making wages even lower. Not only were many thousands of people affected by the collapse of the textile industry, but also of the iron, glass, paper, pottery and jewellery industries.

"The misery hardly finds a parallel in the history of commerce. The bones of its cotton weavers are bleaching the plains of India," William Bentick, the Governor General himself wrote in 1834.

THE IMPACT OF COLONIALISM ON THE TEXTILE TRADE

Before 1860, three-fourths of raw cotton imports into Britain came from America. British cotton manufacturers had for long been worried about this dependence on American supplies.

In 1857, the Cotton Supply Association was founded in Britain and in 1859 the Manchester Cotton company was formed. Their objective was to encourage cotton production in every part of the world suited for its

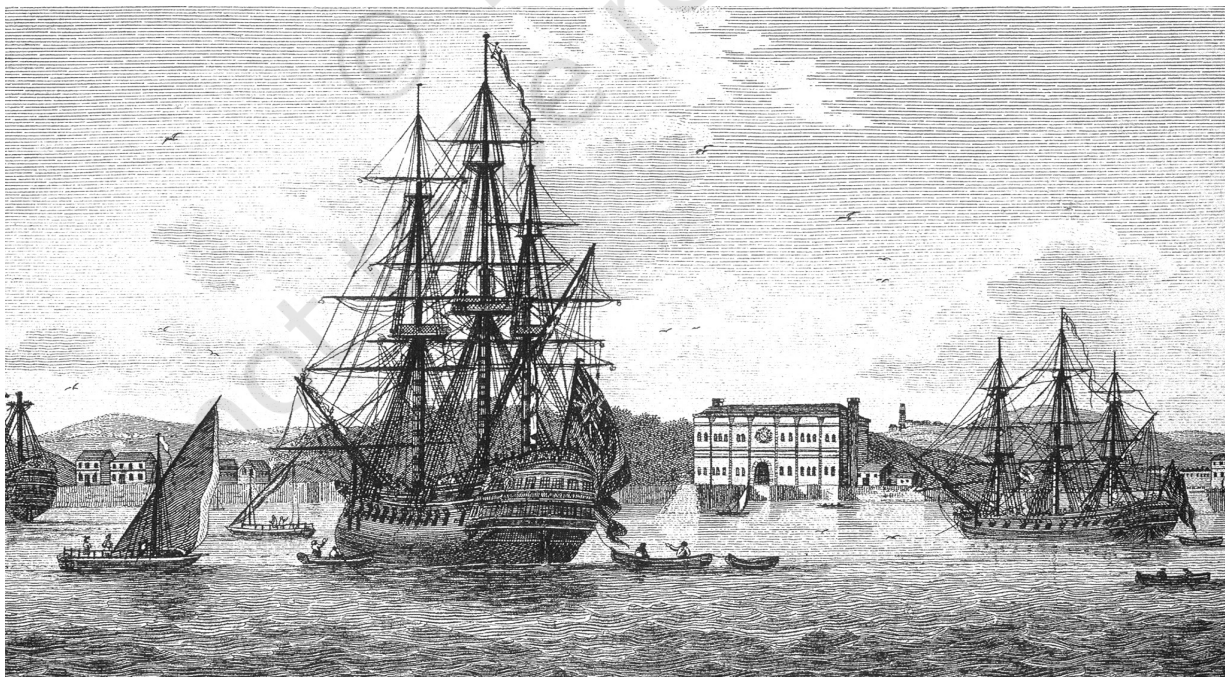


growth. India was seen as a country that could supply cotton to Lancashire if the American supply dried up. India possessed suitable soil, a climate favourable to cotton cultivation, and cheap labour.

When the American Civil War broke out in 1861, a wave of panic spread through cotton circles in Britain; raw cotton imports from America fell to less than three per cent. Frantic messages were sent to India and elsewhere to increase cotton exports to Britain. In Bombay*, cotton merchants visited the cotton districts to assess supplies and encourage cultivation. As cotton prices soared, exports increased to meet the British demand. So advances were given to urban *sahukars*, who in turn extended credit to those rural moneylenders who promised to secure the produce.

These developments had a profound impact on the Deccan countryside. The ryots in the Deccan suddenly found access to seemingly limitless credit. They were given ₹100 as advance for every acre they planted with cotton. *Sahukars* were more than willing to extend long term loans. By 1862 over 90 per cent of cotton imports into Britain came from India.

Bombay harbour: a late-eighteenth-century drawing



* now, Mumbai



CREDIT DRIES UP

However, within a few years the American Civil War ended, cotton production in America revived and Indian cotton export to Britain steadily declined.

When the Civil War ended Britain resumed trade in cotton with America for two reasons: American cotton was a superior type (due to the longer, stronger fibres of its two domesticated native American species); secondly, cotton from plantations in the United States and the Caribbean was much cheaper as it was produced by unpaid slaves. By the mid-nineteenth century, in the United States, cultivating and harvesting cotton had become the leading occupation of slaves.

Export merchants and *sahukars* in the Deccan were no longer keen on extending long term credit. So they decided to close down their operations, restrict their advances to peasants, and demand repayment of outstanding debts, further impoverishing the farmers and the craftspeople.

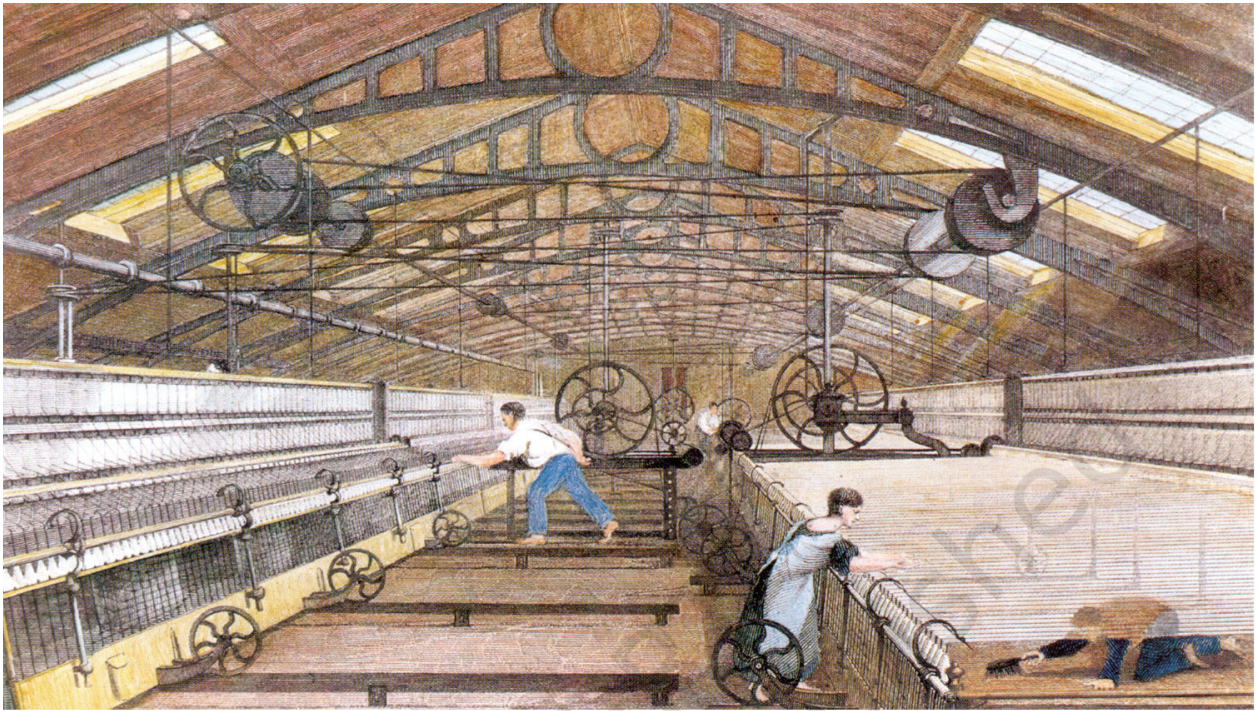
Industrialisation in Britain

The advent of the Industrial Revolution in Britain transformed cotton manufacture, as textiles emerged as Britain's leading export. In 1738 Lewis Paul and John Wyatt of Birmingham, England, patented the Roller Spinning Machine, and the flyer-and-bobbin system for drawing cotton to a more even thickness using two sets of rollers. Later, the invention of the Spinning Jenny in 1764 enabled British weavers to produce cotton yarn and cloth at much faster rates. From the late eighteenth century onwards, the British city of Manchester acquired the nickname 'cottonopolis' due to the cotton industry's omnipresence within the city, and Manchester's role as the heart of the global cotton trade. Production capacity

in Britain and the United States was further improved by the invention of the cotton gin by the American, Eli Whitney, in 1793.

Improving technology and increasing control of world markets allowed British traders to develop a commercial chain in which raw cotton fibres were (at first) purchased from colonial plantations, processed into cotton cloth in the mills of Lancashire, and then re-exported on British ships to captive colonial markets in West Africa, India, and China (via Shanghai and Hong Kong).

The Industrial Revolution in England led to the reversal of trade in which cotton was exported from India to England and manufactured machine-made



A spinning factory in 1830

cotton cloth was brought back to India and sold. The colonial policy of supporting production of raw material in India for British industries and the consumption of British products in India greatly damaged the Indian economy. This along with devastating famines, over-taxation and diversion of revenues back to England were the primary factors for the deteriorating condition of the Indian crafts community. It was this devastating effect of industrialisation that influenced Gandhiji while his philosophy developed during the fight for independence from colonial rule.

RISE, FALL, RISE...

From the fifteenth to the eighteenth century, China and India controlled almost half of the global trade. This pattern continued till India became a part of the British Empire in the nineteenth century, and Chinese trade came to be increasingly controlled by those who controlled the sea routes—England, France and the U.S. India became independent and China turned to communism in the mid-twentieth century and both began to rebuild their economies. In the beginning of the twenty-first century, China and India have become the world's fastest growing economies and the centre of gravity of global trade appears

to be shifting east again. The following pages give a glimpse of the growth trajectory of the Asian giants over 500 years.

As Arab traders ship Indian goods to Europe through the Red Sea and Mediterranean ports, India's economy has a 24.5 per cent share of world income. It is the world's second largest after China. India enjoys a favourable balance of trade—it earns gold and silver from the textiles, sugar, spices, indigo, carpets, etc. it sells.

Direct maritime trade between Europe and China begins with the Portuguese, who lease an outpost at Macau in 1557. Other Europeans follow. India and China trade with each other using overland routes.

Sixteenth Century		At the turn of the century, Mughal India's annual income is greater than the British budget. As the Mughal Empire reaches its zenith under Shah Jahan, Indian exports exceed its imports—it is selling many more things and lots more of each. Chinese ships dock at Quilon and Calicut, while in Khambat the volume of trade is so high that more than 3000 ships visit the port every year.
	INDIA	
	CHINA	China continues to control a quarter of world trade. The English establish a trading post at Canton in 1637. Trade grows further after the Qing emperor relaxes maritime trade restrictions in the 1680's. By now, Taiwan has come under Qing control. But, the sea trade makes the Chinese apprehensive of conquest.
Seventeenth Century		
	INDIA	Aurangzeb's India had a 24.4 per cent share of world income, the largest in the world. But as Mughal power declines, the East India Company disrupts trade relations between India's mercantile community.
	CHINA	In 1760, as China's share of global trade begins to fall, the government sets out regulations for foreigners and foreign ships. Canton is the only port open to alien traders. After their War of Independence (1776), the Americans begin to trade with China; this is a setback for the British.
		In 1820, India's economy is completely controlled by the East India Company—16 per cent of the world income. The Indian agricultural pattern is changed by the Company. By 1870, India has a 12.2 per cent share of the world income.

<p>The Qing king refuses to open all ports to foreign traders and seeks to restrict the opium trade with India. War breaks out twice between Britain and China. A defeated China accepts the opium trade and gives Western merchants access. Tea exports increase 500 per cent in eight years, from 1843 to 1855.</p> <p>In 1913, Indian economy had a mere 7.6 per cent share of world income. In 1952, five years after Independence, it had 3.8 per cent. Though by 1973 the economy had grown to \$494.8 billion, its share of the world income fell to 3.1 per cent. In 1991, economic liberalisation introduced and by 1998, Indian economy accounts for a five per cent share of the world income. By 2005, India's economy is \$3,815.6 billion or a 6.3 per cent share of the world income.</p>	<p><i>Eighteenth Century</i></p> <p>INDIA</p> <p>CHINA</p>
<p>Before communist China comes into being in 1949, the country mainly produces yarn, coal, crude oil, cotton and foodgrain. Mao Zedong puts the country on a socialist path. In 1980, under Deng Xiaoping, China changes track and the first Special Economic Zones are established in Shenzhen. In 1986, Deng's 'Open-door' policy encourages foreign direct investment. In 1992, Deng accelerates market reforms to establish a 'socialist market economy'. For the first time, China figures in the world's top ten economies. In 2001, it joins the WTO.</p>	<p><i>Nineteenth Century</i></p> <p>INDIA</p> <p>CHINA</p>
<p>EXERCISE</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Imagine you are an adventurous English traveller to India in the seventeenth century. Describe the crafts you see. What would you buy to take home and why? 2. Colonialism transformed India from craft producer to a supplier of raw materials—write a short description of this change and how it affected the crafts industry in India. 3. Make a chart or an illustrated story of the history of textiles in India. 4. Industrialisation transformed craft production in England in the nineteenth century. How did it transform Indian craft production in the twentieth century? 5. Compare and contrast trade in India and China over the last 500 years. Illustrate with graphs or tables. 	<p><i>Twentieth Century</i></p> <p>INDIA</p> <p>CHINA</p>

New Professions, Old Skills: from Silversmiths to the Printing Press

By the 1860s and 1870s, the wood and metal engravers of Bat-tala had emerged as the most prominent 'artisan' community in Calcutta's art market.

Initially, traditional artisan groups like ironsmiths, coppersmiths, gold and silversmiths (the *Kansaris*, *Shankharis*, *Swarnakars* and *Karmakars*), finding employment in the new British-owned printing presses at Serampore and Calcutta, had adapted their old skills of working in metal towards preparing type-faces and engraved blocks. By the 1820s and 1830s, these print-makers became a separate community, working primarily with the wood-engraved block to suit the requirements of small-sized pictures in the cheap illustrated Bengali books.

As a result some important changes occurred in the social position and commercial prospects of the artisans who produced them. The engravers at Bat-tala had emerged from traditional artisan communities, with the skills of cutting, carving, furrowing and chipping in various metals. Some of them may even have been descendants of the artisan castes of the *sutradhars* or *shankaris* to which most of the Kalighat *patuas* belonged. But, unlike the Kalighat *patuas*, the engravers came to throw off many of their hereditary

and caste affiliations to become a new, flexible community of printers. The skills of engraving and printing became more and more open and competitive, drawing in persons from various other communities (occasionally even Brahmins) who wished to find a new vocation in this trade.

—TAPATI GUHA-THAKURTA
*The Making of New
Indian Art*

*Lead type in compositor trays;
(inset) type arranged and fixed
in a temporary frame*



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